

VZCZCXRO4328
RR RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHGI RUEHJO RUEHMA RUEHMR RUEHPA RUEHRN RUEHTRO
DE RUEHAN #0823 2320511
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 200511Z AUG 07
FM AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0225
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHMFIUU/CJTF HOA

UNCLAS ANTANANARIVO 000823

SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR AF/E AND AF/FO
ADDIS FOR USAU
PARIS FOR D'ELIA
PRETORIA FOR POLCOUNS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [CN](#)
SUBJECT: MORE COMORANS DROWN ON FAILED CROSSING TO MAYOTTE

REF: A) ANTANANARI 815

B) ANTANANARI 757

11. (U) Seventeen illegal immigrants reportedly drowned August 13 when their boat capsized while trying to evade the French Coast Guard as they tried to cross from the Union of the Comoros island of Anjouan to the nearby French territory of Mayotte. At least 30 people have died trying to make this crossing in the last two years, although this is probably a very low estimate, based on ships or wrecks that are found by French Mayotte coast guard. Tens of thousands of Comorans attempt the 44-mile crossing each year, hoping to find opportunity, and a higher quality of health care, in Mayotte when there is virtually none in the independent Union of the Comoros (REF B). French Mayotte authorities told the media 14,000 illegal immigrants - most from the Comoros - were expelled in 2006.

12. (SBU) The scale of this illegal immigration problem - tens of thousands compared to the Comoros' total population of about 700,000 - reflects the dramatic disparity between the independent Union of the Comoros and the French protectorate of Mayotte. Media reports suggest that French President Sarkozy's tough stance on illegal immigration has led to enhanced enforcement in Mayotte. President Sambi told EmbOffs August 14 (REF A) that he has discussed the illegal immigration problem at length with French officials. He asserts that the people of Mayotte are Comoran, and the people of all four islands are "one nation." Sambi further shared with us that he has told French officials they should spend a fraction of the millions of euros it costs to repatriate illegals on investment in the Comoros' economic development. If the French helped create jobs in the Comoros, the President reasoned, fewer people would attempt to emigrate illegally and dangerously to Mayotte.

MARQUARDT